

projects—for water quality, water supply, and fisheries protection—to move forward.

I urge my colleagues to vote today in support of the Senate amendments to H.R. 2828.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Just in closing I want to thank all of my colleagues who were able to work in a bipartisan manner to get this done. The gentleman from California (Chairman CALVERT) worked on this bill for a long time, and before him the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) worked on this bill, and there was a lot of work that went into making this happen. And we all know that some of our colleagues were not as cooperative, but I do appreciate those that were able to work with us and get this done.

I urge the passage of the bill.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the passage of H.R. 2828 today.

Califed reauthorization is an issue that Congress has debated for years and years and today—as a result of numerous parties working together—we are making significant strides toward increasing water supply, quality and reliability for California.

This is an enormous accomplishment and I applaud Representatives POMBO, NAPOLITANO and CALVERT and our esteemed Senator from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, for overcoming the numerous hurdles that have prevented this issue from progressing in years past.

This proposal will greatly strengthen California's agricultural economy and address the needs of a fast growing population by creating additional surface storage projects.

This delicate balance, while difficult to achieve, is critical to the success of Califed.

Today, I urge my colleagues to support this measure because it will set California on the path to a sustainable water supply for its citizens, its economy and its environment.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2828, the Water Supply, Reliability, and Environmental Improvement Act. This legislation, authored by my good friend, Resources Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman KEN CALVERT, is the result of many years of hard work by the California water community to find a way to balance the competing water needs of agriculture, the environment, and a growing population.

My district in the Central Valley of California is a prime example of these changing needs. In 1960, Kern County had a population of about 291,000 people and an agricultural base that produced commodities with a farm gate value of \$247 million. In 2000, those numbers had increased to a population of 661,000 people and farm gate value approaching \$2.5 billion. Much of this growth is due to the construction of the State Water Project in the mid-1960's, but virtually no investment in that all-important infrastructure has been made since that time. Our water infrastructure requires attention and upgrading to continue supporting California's agriculture economy, and H.R. 2828 provides for many of these necessary improvements.

I congratulate all my colleagues from California who have worked tirelessly to overcome regional differences and reconcile competing

priorities to ensure that this vital legislation is enacted.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 2828.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendment was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVEMENTS TO EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION SYSTEM UNDER IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4306) to amend section 274A of the Immigration and Nationality Act to improve the process for verifying an individual's eligibility for employment, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4306

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. IMPROVEMENTS TO EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION SYSTEM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 274A(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1324a(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(A), by inserting before “A person or entity has complied” the following: “Such attestation may be manifested by either a hand-written or an electronic signature.”;

(2) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following: “Such attestation may be manifested by either a hand-written or an electronic signature.”; and

(3) in paragraph (3), by inserting “a paper, microfiche, microfilm, or electronic version of” after “must retain”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the earlier of—

(1) the date on which final regulations implementing such amendments take effect; or

(2) 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4306 currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4306, which would allow employers to electronically complete and store Eligibility Employment Verification Forms, known as Forms I-9.

Currently, employers must complete one of these forms for each employee to show that they have verified that the employee is eligible to work in the United States. The employer must then retain that form for at least 3 years and make it available for inspection by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, and the Department of Labor.

This legislation is straightforward and sensible. It would benefit employers in preparing and storing Forms I-9 and benefit the government in enforcing immigration, antidiscrimination, and the labor laws of our Nation.

The current regulation requires employers to retain Forms I-9 “in their original form or on microfilm or microfiche.” This regulation, promulgated in 1988, has failed to keep up with modern technology. For this reason, almost all employers have resorted to keeping Forms I-9 in the original format in which they are completed, that is, on paper.

With employers required to retain a Form I-9 for each employee for years, American businesses are holding an overwhelming number of the forms today. That is a lot of paper and paper which can easily be lost, damaged, or tampered with. This format is insecure, wasteful, and with the advent of electronic data storage, totally unnecessary.

Allowing the electronic completion and storage of Forms I-9 would also aid the men and women charged with enforcing our law, particularly when auditing large employers with multiple outlets spread across the country. In reviewing the Forms I-9 of employers who choose to keep the documents electronically, officers will be able to request one electronic file instead of potentially thousands of paper documents. This legislation would not require employers to electronically complete or store Forms I-9. It would simply permit them to do so if they so choose.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, and as well, I want to acknowledge the chairman of the Immigration, Border Security, and Claims Subcommittee and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), ranking member on the full committee.

This is an important change on the benefits side of the immigration puzzle. This regulation, 8 CFR 274a2(b)(2) requires United States employers to